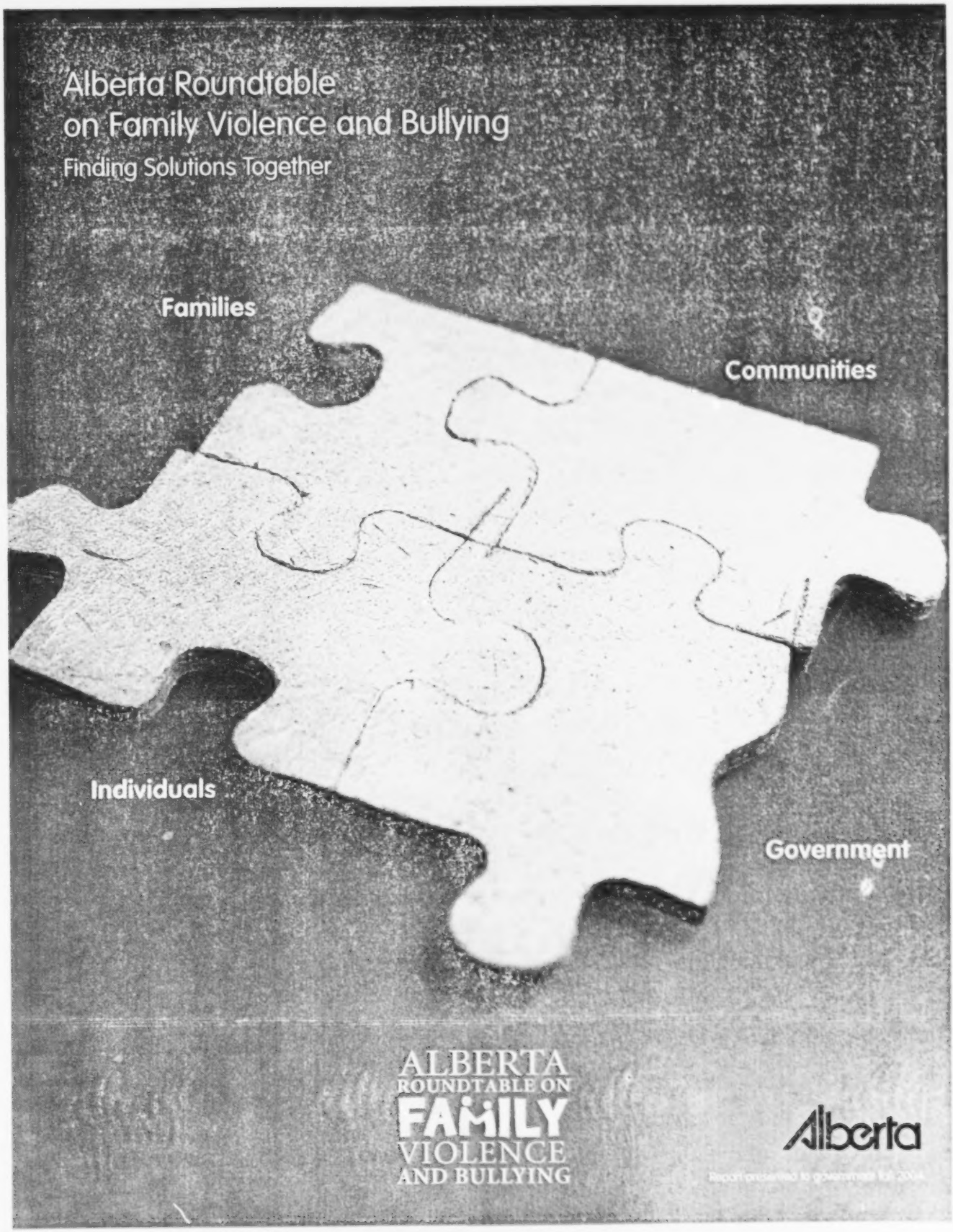
Alberta Roundtable
on Family Violence and Bullying
Finding Solutions Together
Families
Communities
Individuals
Government
ALBERTA
ROUNDTABLE ON
FAMILY
VIOLENCE
AND BULLYING
Alberta

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Key definitions

Family violence

Family violence is the abuse of power within relationships of family, trust or dependency that endangers the survival, security or well-being of another person. It can include many forms of abuse including spouse abuse, senior abuse and neglect, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, parent abuse, and witnessing abuse of others in the family. Family violence may include some or all of the following behaviours: physical abuse, psychological abuse, criminal harassment/stalking, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, and spiritual abuse.

Bullying

Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and/or a threat of aggression. When bullying escalates unabated, it may lead to a feeling of terror on the part of the individual being bullied. Bullying may include, but is not limited to: physical intimidation or assault; extortion; oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name calling; threatening looks, gestures or actions; cruel rumours; false accusations; and social isolation.

Highlights

Introduction

Family violence and bullying have no place in Alberta society. It's time for action.

That was the key message coming from a comprehensive province-wide roundtable process on family violence and bullying. The process involved a broad cross section of Albertans including victims of family violence and bullying, experts, community organizations, Aboriginal peoples, and interested Albertans.

The result of these extensive discussions was the development of a Framework for Action. The Framework was confirmed by participants at the provincial roundtable held in May 2004.

Following the roundtable, the provincial government has reviewed the Framework and the wealth of ideas and advice received through the process. This report is designed to take the next step. It sets out key areas for action and highlights some important steps to be taken. It reinforces a clear message that solutions for preventing family violence and bullying must be developed together - by individuals committing to positive change, by involving all members of a family in the healing process, by community people working together, and by government supporting communities to reach their goals. And it reflects our strong commitment to make the prevention of family violence and bullying a top priority, now and in the future.

The report outlines some critical starting points:

- Family violence and bullying are everyone's business.
- Family violence and bullying are clearly linked, although the strategies for addressing them may be different.
- A lot of important work is already underway, and the focus of the report is to build on that foundation.
- It will take time to achieve the goals we set.
- Family violence and bullying affect people of all ages, all incomes and all cultures. We need to tailor our actions to be effective for the broad range of people affected.
- No single entity - whether that's an individual family, a community, or the provincial government - can solve this problem alone. Solutions to family violence and bullying must be found together.
- This report is a starting point. More work will be done in the coming years to assess progress, set priorities, and expand actions.

Key areas for action

The overall vision outlined in this report is to create "an Alberta where children and families are free from family violence and bullying." To achieve that vision, the report outlines key actions to be undertaken. Consistent with the Framework developed through the roundtable process, actions will be taken in each of the following five areas:

- Social change
- Provincial leadership
- A collaborative, coordinated community response
- Services and supports
- Accountability

Action begins

Highlights of actions to be taken include the following:

Social change:

- ✔ Launch a province-wide family violence awareness campaign
- ✔ Develop and implement a cross-ministry education and awareness bullying prevention strategy
- ✔ Enhance early childhood development and supports for children, including new Parent Link Centres being developed across the province

- Highlight the role of youth in increasing awareness about the prevention of family violence and bullying

Provincial Leadership

- Establish a single, cross-sector entity for province-wide leadership
- Establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee
- Establish an Ethno-cultural Working Group
- Maintain and enhance the work of the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and Bullying
- Engage youth in provincial policy development and local implementation
- Review current legislation to ensure it supports the prevention of family violence and bullying

A collaborative, coordinated community response

- Establish a Community Incentive Program to support the development of local actions
- Develop a community planning guide
- Develop community engagement strategies by and for Aboriginal communities
- Enhance cross-sector training
- Establish clear guidelines for information sharing among frontline responders to family violence and bullying

Services and supports

- Implement a Provincial Family Violence Program Framework
- Enhance the justice response to family violence
- Provide additional support to families escaping family violence
- Expand access to safe accommodations
- Expand support available to victims of family violence and abuse
- Use targeted telephone lines (211) to provide immediate access to essential information whenever family violence occurs
- Expand the availability and access to safe visitation and access sites
- Make specialized services and supports available and accessible to people who have experienced sexual assaults as part of family violence

Accountability

- Develop a provincial family violence and bullying research partnership
- Establish a database of programs, initiatives and information, and update on an annual basis
- Partner with national and international leaders to hold a world conference on family violence

Next steps

This report outlines a number of actions and initiatives to prevent family violence and bullying. Some actions can and will be taken immediately. Others depend on more extensive planning, working with communities, and allocating the necessary resources. An immediate next step is to develop a cross-ministry plan targeted actions and resource requirements.

The new single entity proposed in the report will be responsible for ongoing leadership on family violence and bullying in the longer term. It will determine longer term strategies, assess the outcomes achieved, and report regularly to Albertans on the progress made.

With the completion of the roundtable process, action can now begin. Working together, as individuals, families, communities and governments, we can find the best solutions. We can achieve the vision of an Alberta free of family violence and bullying. Most important, we can break the cycle of violence and make sure all Alberta's children grow up in safe and secure families.

Introduction

Family violence and bullying have no place in Alberta society. It's time for action. It's time to commit to one another, to the children, youth and families of Alberta, and to ourselves that Alberta will become a province free of violence and abuse.

Those words are taken directly from the Framework for Action presented at a provincial Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying held in May 2004. Sadly, in spite of the fact that Alberta is a prosperous province with an outstanding quality of life, too often the lives of children, individuals and families are scarred by family violence and bullying. In 2003, there were 5,921 spousal abuse incidents reported to police in Alberta. During the same period, 3,666 charges related to spousal abuse were laid and six deaths were attributed to spousal abuse. A Canadian Institute for Health Information Report released in September 2003, showed that Alberta has a higher proportion of cases involving domestic violence against women than any other province (based on 1999 statistics). In about half the reported cases of sexual violence, the victims have family ties with the abuser. Research suggests that a significant number of children and adolescents are affected by family violence, both as victims of abuse or neglect and through exposure to parental violence. Other studies indicate that bullying occurs every seven minutes on the playground and every 25 minutes in the classroom.

These numbers merely serve to underscore the importance of taking comprehensive and direct action to address the root causes of family violence and bullying, to help keep victims safe, and to work together at all levels to build and maintain an Alberta free of family violence and bullying.

The provincial roundtable was the culmination of months of consultations across the province - listening to the views of victims of family violence and bullying, hearing from experts, community organizations and Aboriginal peoples, and exploring a wide range of options for action. Over 3000 people participated through the Roundtable, 13 regional workshops, more than 33 focus groups with specific individuals and groups, and a public questionnaire.

The goal of the roundtable process was to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations for action. That goal has been achieved.

Thanks to the active participation and ideas of people from all parts of the province, a comprehensive Framework for Action was developed and confirmed by participants at the provincial roundtable in May. The Framework describes the overall direction and the essential building blocks that must be in place for an effective approach to family violence and bullying.

The provincial government has listened to the wealth of ideas and advice received through the roundtable process. This report is designed to take the next step. It reinforces the provincial government's strong commitment to the principles and key areas for action developed through the roundtable process. It highlights the need for individuals, families, communities and governments to work together to find the best solutions and to prevent family violence and bullying. It highlights important actions to be taken on an initial basis. And it reflects our strong commitment to make the prevention of family violence and bullying a top priority now and in the future.

It's important to highlight some key points at the outset.

- **Family violence and bullying are everyone's business.** That theme was repeated throughout the roundtable process. It reinforces an important message that family violence and bullying are not someone else's responsibility. It's only through comprehensive action by communities, governments, agencies and organizations, Aboriginal peoples, businesses, faith communities, cultural groups, and individual Albertans that we can succeed in preventing family violence and bullying.

- **Family violence and bullying are clearly linked.** Although, at first glance, family violence and bullying may appear to be separate issues, there is a rapidly increasing base of evidence indicating a strong relationship between the two complex social issues. The similar root causes of family violence and bullying provide an exceptional opportunity to coordinate prevention and early intervention responses. At the same time, while there are common ways of addressing prevention and early intervention, it's also clear that targeted, and sometimes very different strategies, are needed to ensure appropriate intervention, protection and follow-up support. This was reinforced by roundtable participants and by the expert panel members at the roundtable. They underscored the importance of early childhood development and school age strategies with community, parents and young people as society's best chance to effect positive change and influence the power and control behaviours that perpetuate family violence and bullying across generations.

- **A lot of important work is already underway** across various ministries and especially in communities across the province. Social workers, community agencies, police, teachers, doctors and nurses, and a whole range of community members are actively involved in addressing issues related to family violence. This report is designed to build on the work currently underway. Most important, it is designed to capture, harness and channel the energy, ideas and commitment of all those involved in this issue so we have a consistent and well-coordinated approach for dealing with all aspects of family violence and bullying.

- **It will take time to achieve the goals we set**. There are no simple solutions that can be implemented overnight. Instead, we need to commit to a longer term process, take action step by step, and work together to prevent family violence and bullying.

- **For actions to be effective, they must recognize the fact that family violence and bullying affect people of all ages, all incomes, and all cultures**. Family violence is not unique to a specific gender or sexual orientation, although by numbers alone, more of the victims of extreme violence and physical harm are women and children. It affects people from all walks of life - young people and old, people with disabilities and people with special talents, highly paid professionals and those who struggle with lower incomes. There are no "one size fits all" solutions to address the diversity of people affected by family violence and bullying. We need to get past the stereotypes, design and deliver effective services, and ensure that programs and services are adapted to reflect the diversity of Alberta society and the wide range of people affected by family violence and bullying.

- **No single entity - whether that's an individual, family, a community, or the provincial government - can solve this problem alone**. Preventing family violence and bullying will take the collective efforts of individual Albertans in their personal actions and decisions, family members, communities across the province, and government. The provincial government must support the efforts of communities, families and individual Albertans if we hope to achieve the objectives set out in this report.

- **Finally, this plan is just a starting point**. It is a clear signal that the work of the roundtable process began in earnest on May 7. In many ways, the hard work is just beginning. That hard work must involve actions and plans in each and every community across the province. It must involve the continuing energy and support of various organizations and agencies, Aboriginal peoples, businesses, community partners, and individuals themselves.

With this report, the provincial government commits to work with Albertans to achieve a single over-riding goal - to make Alberta a province where all children, families, and individual Albertans can live their lives free of violence and abuse.

Highlights from the Roundtable Process

The roundtable process provided an essential catalyst for ideas and discussions across the province. Two important messages about family violence were highlighted at the outset.

- First, it's important to recognize the scope of family violence and bullying in our society and the diversity of people affected. While many people might think primarily of women and children as the victims of family violence, in fact, family violence affects everyone regardless of gender, sexual orientation, culture, abilities and disabilities, income and age. It affects not only the victims and their families but everyone connected with the family and the community as a whole.

- Second, we need to take a comprehensive approach focusing on three essential areas:
  - prevention
  - intervention and protection
  - outreach and follow-up

Diversity of Populations Impacted by Family Violence and Bullying

People Impacted	Diversity of Population
All Family members	Marginalized/vulnerable populations
Partners	Multi-barriered populations
Parents	People of all ages, young and old
Siblings	People in all income brackets
Extended family	Aboriginal communities (including First Nations, Métis, and urban Aboriginal people)
Victims	People in rural, isolated communities and big cities
Women/men	Cultural communities
Children/youth/seniors	Developmentally and physically disabled
Perpetrators	Gays, lesbians, transgendered and bi-sexual
Abusers	Immigrants
Bullies	Mail-order and trafficked spouses
Service providers/caregivers	Sexually exploited
Employers and co-workers	Homeless
All community members, including faith communities and a wide range of individuals and organizations	Mentally ill
	Substance abusers

In addition to confirming the Framework for Action (discussed in more detail in the following section), participants at the provincial roundtable provided some important direction for the next steps to be taken.

- All partners in this initiative must acknowledge that change takes time. Initiating change of this scale and scope will require long-term, sustainable commitment.
- There must be an emphasis on proactive initiatives - those that deal with the root causes of violence. Strategies must therefore place a priority on prevention and early intervention.
- There was consistent support by participants for moving quickly to establish an over-riding organization/entity with a mandate to ensure progress and results in tackling the issues of family violence and bullying in Alberta.
- Adequate resources and/or funding are essential to support change and collaboration whether from new or re-allocated dollars.
- Planning must define short-, medium- and long-term actions. We must be realistic about what's achievable and approach this long-term commitment as a staged initiative.
- The focus must remain on building community and family capacity. Within the family violence framework, Aboriginal communities must create their own solutions and also be involved in mainstream policy development.
- Aboriginal strategies must take into account the Aboriginal Policy Framework and respect the roles, responsibilities and jurisdiction of the various governments and partners involved.
- Some strong initiatives such as a one-stop source of information in communities, strengthening government coordination, and initiating province-wide awareness/education should be developed to build early momentum.
- Information sharing across sectors, ministries and agencies is essential.
- Incentives to encourage and recognize true collaboration should be developed and implemented.
- Action should be taken quickly to improve training. Training should be extensive and widely accessible and it should be available across all sectors, ministries and service providers.
- Diverse communities should be included and engaged in the process. The Framework for Action should address the realities of diverse audiences and communities.
- Strong involvement of the corporate community, service clubs and community groups is essential.
- Baseline data is necessary. Measurement tools need to be developed to ensure the nature, rate and scope of change is documented.
- The media must be a key partner in social change.
- Individual commitment will be crucial. Preventing violence in our society is everybody's business.

Key Areas for Action

As a result of the roundtable process, a comprehensive Framework for Action was developed and endorsed at the provincial roundtable. The overall direction and fundamental principles of the Framework for Action are supported by the provincial government and are reflected in this report.

One significant change is being made as a result of further discussions following the May roundtable. Initially, the Framework identified a separate stream of actions specific to Aboriginal communities. The roundtable process provided an opportunity for Aboriginal participants to discuss issues and propose actions specific to their historical and current experiences, traditions and communities. Clearly, Aboriginal leaders, individuals and communities must be responsible for identifying their own priorities and developing their own solutions. There is much to learn from Aboriginal approaches to healing and addressing the underlying causes of family violence for individuals and the community as a whole. Non-Aboriginal people also share a responsibility for addressing many of the issues identified through the roundtable process including issues related to stereotypes and racism, cooperation among communities, and building community capacity.

The approach that has been taken in this report is to include the Aboriginal actions within the overall approach but not to lose the paramount responsibility of Aboriginal people to develop, implement and "own" their own solutions and actions. The approach also recognizes that some Aboriginal communities may require additional capacity building and supports. Actions undertaken as a result of this report should be closely aligned with the Aboriginal Policy Framework and also respect the various agreements in place between the Government of Alberta and the First Nations and Métis peoples. Appropriate mechanisms will be put in place to assist Aboriginal people to lead and support communities in their search for the best solutions to unique Aboriginal issues related to family violence and bullying. At the same time, there must be clear links between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal strategies and communities.

With that context in mind, this report outlines a comprehensive approach, focusing on key areas for action identified through the roundtable process.

Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Key Areas for Action

Social change

- Change public awareness, knowledge and attitudes
- Invest in our society
- Focus on prevention and education
- Place a higher priority on early intervention
- Expand mentoring and community leadership
- Address stereotypes and racism involving Aboriginal people and communities*

Provincial leadership

- Establish enabling legislation
- Maintain a long-term sustainable commitment
- Enhance the cross-ministry approach
- Establish a single, cross sector agency to take the lead
- Respect and address Aboriginal jurisdictional issues through cooperation among Aboriginal, federal and provincial governments*

A collaborative, coordinated community response

- Establish a collaborative, coordinated community model
- Provide support for collaboration
- Establish long-term sustainable community solutions
- Expand the use of multi-disciplinary teams
- Expand education and training for those who work with Aboriginal communities*
- Provide cross sector training
- Ensure that essential information can be shared
- Build Aboriginal community resources and capacity*

Services and supports

- Ensure equitable access to services and supports
- Establish a single point of access to services and supports
- Enable safe reporting
- Ensure advocates are available for victims
- Expand the availability of emergency/safe housing
- Provide transitional support(s)
- Provide treatment and counseling
- Ensure adequate protection services
- Address concerns with custody and access disputes
- Ensure that services and supports respond to those affected by family violence and bullying
- Ensure an effective justice response
- Use a holistic approach that reflects Aboriginal culture and tradition*
- Improve access to and availability of services in Aboriginal communities*

Accountability

- Support evidence-based practices and expand community-based research and evaluation, including expanded research in Aboriginal communities
- Establish and track measurable outcomes
- Ensure transparency and clear reporting of outcomes achieved by all partners including community agencies, organizations and provincial ministries
- Reinforce consequences for actions and individual accountability

* This area for action was developed as part of the Aboriginal response identified through the roundtable process.

Setting a clear direction

This report is designed to act as a catalyst for achieving the following vision:

An Alberta where children and families are free from family violence and bullying.

Consistent with that vision, the provincial government's mission is as follows:

All government departments and community agencies will work together with individuals, families and communities to break the complex cycle of family violence and bullying and to respond, when necessary, with integrated, seamless services for those affected by family violence and bullying in Alberta.

The objectives of this report are to:

- Build a common vision of a province free of family violence and bullying
- Raise awareness and ensure ongoing and meaningful involvement with the Alberta public to change social attitudes and stop family violence and bullying
- Ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach at all levels including governments and communities
- Ensure supports and services are designed, delivered and evaluated at a community level, involving a broad range of community members and identifying and addressing the unique needs, strengths and diversity within communities
- Ensure better access to family violence and bullying supports and services for children, youth, families and all community members to help them be safe in their homes, schools and communities. That includes the full continuum of services from prevention to intervention, first response, outreach, follow-up, and ongoing education.
- Ensure that those directly impacted by family violence and bullying are treated with respect and dignity and directly involved in decisions that affect them
- Ensure that there are consequences for family violence and bullying behaviour that reflect both personal accountability and the opportunity for healing
- Ensure that all supports and services are accountable for improving the outcomes for individuals, families and communities affected by family violence and bullying
- Make the best use of available resources, both human and financial

Action begins

The Key Areas for Action, combined with literally hundreds of ideas coming from the roundtable process, provide an excellent starting point. At the same time, not all actions can be taken at once. Many will take considerable time and resources to implement. And many require extensive action at the community level to put appropriate plans and resources in place.

This report identifies a package of initial steps that can and must be implemented on a priority basis. The priority actions reflect a combination of the advice received through the roundtable process as well as extensive consultations with the various partnering ministries involved in issues related to family violence and bullying.

This report should be seen as only the first step in a long-term commitment to address and prevent family violence and bullying.

It's also important to note that, within the various provincial ministries, a wide range of programs, services and supports currently is in place. This report builds on the foundation that currently is in place. Highlights of many of the current programs and initiatives are outlined in a summary document called Taking Action on Family Violence, available at www.familyviolenceroundtable.gov.ab.ca.

Social change

Preventing family violence and bullying requires a change in attitudes and a clear recognition that family violence is everyone's business. This is a long-term strategy designed to increase awareness and understanding of the impact of family violence and bullying and to support targeted strategies aimed at preventing family violence in communities across the province.

- **Launch a province-wide family violence awareness campaign**

Recognizing that change takes time, this new awareness campaign will take a longer-term perspective. The goals are to recognize that family violence is violence that cannot be tolerated in Alberta society, and to mobilize communities so they can take action, know how to give help and get help, and work together to stop family violence. Mass media exposure will be an important component of the campaign. Education strategies will also be developed, including presentations targeted to service providers and the general public. Plans also include specific steps to increase awareness of issues for older adults impacted by family violence. Abuse and neglect of older adults by family members have a significant impact not only on the individuals directly involved but also on families and communities, on younger generations, and our society as a whole. To increase awareness of the seriousness of this issue, Elder Abuse will be included in the public awareness strategy for Family Violence Prevention Month.

- **Develop and implement a cross-ministry education and awareness bullying prevention strategy targeted at individuals, families and communities**

We know that one of the best ways to change attitudes and prevent family violence and bullying is to start when children are young. Many of the root causes of family violence and bullying are common. However, bullying also requires some specific strategies and approaches to promote positive behaviour in family, community and school environments. In order to do that, children, youth and the adults in their lives need to be aware of what bullying is and how to take personal and collective responsibility to stop bullying behaviour.

An awareness initiative will be targeted at preventing and stopping bullying and promoting positive behaviour and attitudes within and between individuals, families and groups. The strategy will be led by the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI), a collaborative partnership of government ministries working together on children and youth issues. It will build on successful approaches such as Safe and Caring Schools, Effective Behaviour Supports, Roots of Empathy and a multitude of community-based programs and services. The goal is to raise awareness of what bullying is, to identify what we can do to stop that behaviour in ourselves and others, and to encourage a change in societal attitudes towards bullying. The initial focus will be on children, youth and the community and could include places where children and youth go such as day cares, schools, rinks, and other recreation sites. A variety of multi-media strategies will be used. Links with the broader family violence awareness campaign will be developed and maintained to ensure coherent, collaborative and consistent messages.

Work on prevention of bullying is currently underway and includes the following:

- An inventory of research and resources related to bullying is being compiled and a strategy for making that information available to all stakeholders is being developed
- Training opportunities are planned including presentations at conferences, regional consortia, and other local community forums
- Work has commenced with Victoria Composite High School's drama department, the Office of Prevention of Family Violence, and Alberta Learning to provide support and information to students developing skits on bullying for the "Diverse Voices" Family Violence Conference to be held in Edmonton in November 2004
- The Effective Behaviour Support (EBS) initiative was implemented to meet the increasing demand for training and assistance for schools to help them create and maintain positive school environments. Data collected from schools involved in this initiative indicates an overall increase in the rate of positive behaviour and a decrease in the number of negative behaviours such as bullying. Alberta Learning will provide additional education resources to respond to the increasing demand for support in building positive school environments and preventing behaviours such as bullying

✔ Enhance early childhood development and supports for parents

The relationship between early childhood development and positive learning and health outcomes is well known. We also understand the devastating and lasting impact child abuse and exposure to family violence can have on children. Consistent with the need to place a higher priority on early intervention and the findings of the Learning Commission Report, a network of Parent Link Centres is being developed across the province. A minimum of sixteen Parent Link Centres will be established in 2004-05. Initially, two of the Parent Link Centres will have a specific focus on Aboriginal parents and children. A Minister's Advisory Committee has been established to provide leadership and support to communities in developing this initiative. Child and Family Services Authorities will work with municipalities, regional health authorities and school boards to identify and develop Parent Link Centres in their communities.

Parent Link Centres will provide parents and their children with the necessary supports to ensure that the children come to school ready to learn and parents have the supports needed to help their children develop and fulfill their potential. Parents will be able to access vital information, obtain referrals, and meet other parents and children, while taking part in quality early learning activities.

✔ Highlight the role of youth in increasing awareness about the prevention of family violence and bullying

Alberta's youth have a unique voice. Too often, they have been the victims of family violence and bullying and they see the consequences first hand. They also have an ability to deliver the message and connect to other youth in a way that adults cannot. Youth will be actively engaged in developing, market testing and delivering these messages. As part of Family Violence Prevention Month, support will be provided for youth to develop and deliver a social drama on family violence and bullying to young people in communities across the province. Ongoing support for youth to develop their own community-based strategies will also be encouraged through regional youth forums and training for youth leadership.

Provincial Leadership

While many communities and government ministries are working hard to address the various issues related to family violence and bullying, there currently is no overall mechanism to ensure comprehensive leadership and concerted action on a province-wide basis. The provincial government will take the lead in establishing the necessary mechanisms, engaging communities and key partners, assessing progress, and following through on the various actions identified in this plan.

✔ Establish a single, cross-sector entity for province-wide leadership

One of the top priorities identified through the roundtable process was the need for a single cross sector agency to increase the profile, coordinate and provide province-wide leadership in addressing issues related to family violence and bullying. Although there were different ideas about how it would be structured, the need for a single, cross-sector agency was consistently highlighted throughout the roundtable process.

The role of the new single entity could include province-wide leadership, ongoing research, public awareness, and ensuring an effective, coordinated and collaborative province-wide response to family violence and bullying.

There are different models that could be used for such an entity. As a first step, a Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Advisory Committee will be established. Members of the Committee will reflect a diverse range of geographic, community and service perspectives, as well as representatives from the Aboriginal Advisory Committee, the Ethno-cultural Working Group and the Youth Secretariat. The Committee will develop options for the structure and responsibilities of a single entity and provide advice to the provincial government on implementation of this report.

The Executive Director for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying will provide support to the single entity and ensure coordination with government and community partners.

✔ Establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee

Consistent with the need to engage Aboriginal leaders and community members in the development of solutions specific to Aboriginal communities, a new Aboriginal Advisory Committee will be established. It will provide advice on the most effective ways of engaging Aboriginal communities in implementing the directions outlined in this report. To ensure linkages with the overall province-wide approach, a representative of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee will be included on the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Advisory Committee.

✔ Establish an Ethno-cultural Working Group

Preventing and responding to family violence and bullying is much more complex when cultural differences and language barriers are taken into account. Recognizing the diversity of Alberta society and the need to understand and respond to the realities of different cultures and traditions, an Ethno-cultural Working Group will be established. Its role will include reviewing strategies, providing feedback, and suggesting modifications to ensure that various initiatives and actions are appropriate for the diversity of ethno-cultural groups in Alberta.

✔ Maintain and enhance the work of the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and Bullying

The need to coordinate policies, programs and services at the provincial level and remove barriers among the various ministries was a clear and consistent message from the roundtable process. While much has been done to improve coordination across ministries since the committee's establishment in 1984, this process is designed to take coordination and collaboration of family violence initiatives to the next level - to engage ministries in common planning and common initiatives where responsibility and accountability are fully shared. The work of this committee will be coordinated by the Executive Director for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying. The Chair of the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative has appointed a liaison to this committee to ensure effective coordination of family violence and bullying strategies across government.

✔ Engage youth in provincial policy development and local implementation

Young people have an important role not only in providing a voice for those affected by family violence and bullying but also in helping to set direction and identify priority actions. Youth membership on the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Advisory Committee will be required as recommended by the Youth Secretariat. In addition, specific resources will be available to support youth participation in planning and program development for both provincial and local community initiatives. Further steps will be taken to actively engage youth, develop their leadership skills at the community level, and ensure their voices are heard in developing provincial policy.

✔ Review current legislation to ensure that it supports the prevention of family violence and bullying

The link between exposure to domestic violence and serious cognitive, emotional and behavioural problems is well established. The innovative *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, to be proclaimed November 1, 2004, includes a definition of emotional injury that includes exposure to domestic violence. This will allow service providers to work with children and families through early intervention strategies that increase the likelihood of positive family outcomes.

A review of current legislation related to family violence issues is underway to ensure any new or amended family violence legislation will support a comprehensive and coordinated provincial response to family violence and bullying as outlined in this report.

A collaborative, coordinated community response

In many ways, the most important actions must take place at the community level close to where people live. Strategies for addressing family violence and bullying must reflect the unique needs of each and every community. Above all, they must enable all service agencies to work together at all levels - the management level, the administrative level, and, most important, the street level. Community agencies and workers, police, caseworkers, shelter workers, probation and parole officers, and all others involved need to be able to pool their talents and energies daily to provide the best possible solutions to the concrete problems individuals and families face. They also need to take into account the unique needs and circumstances of people from various cultures, young people and seniors, and people with disabilities. Coordinated plans and strategies should be in place in communities across the province.

The provincial government can and will play an important role in facilitating and supporting community plans and actions and sharing information about the various community initiatives.

✔ Establish a Community Incentive Fund to support the development of local actions

Communities gave a clear message that they require government as partners to build a coordinated and collaborative response to family violence and bullying. An initial $2 million in community grants will be available through Alberta Children's Services to support community partnerships, build on current capacity, identify community solutions, and facilitate community action on family violence and bullying. Government and communities, including Aboriginal communities, will work together to set priorities and make the most effective use of all available resources. Some support will be available to provincial organizations and province wide activities that help build a more coordinated and collaborative response across the province. The fund will be guided by clear criteria that reflect the key areas for action identified in this report.

✔ Develop a community planning guide

While the responsibility for community action lies with communities, the provincial government can play an important facilitating role by developing a community planning guide. The guide will outline the components necessary for a comprehensive and coordinated response to family violence and bullying. It will include examples of effective programs, practices and protocols as well as information on other sources of support available to communities. The guide will include tools to help communities assess their current capacities and track progress in addressing all the key areas for action in this report.

✔ Develop community engagement strategies by and for Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal people must be responsible for identifying their own needs and developing their own solutions. One of the primary responsibilities of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee will be to work with Aboriginal leaders and community members to develop effective community engagement strategies for a wide range of Aboriginal communities, including Aboriginal people living in major urban centres. The provincial government will facilitate that process through its ongoing support of the work of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee. A coordinator is now in place to work with Aboriginal communities over the next two years. The federal government will also be encouraged to participate in discussions with First Nations communities regarding the development of family violence and bullying response strategies.

✔ Enhance cross-sector training

One of the important priorities identified through the roundtable process was the need for expanded cross-sector training to increase awareness and provide training on how to address issues related to family violence and bullying. This expanded training will be focused on domestic violence response, children exposed to family violence (already underway), and information sharing among front-line responders. Cross-sector training and public service announcements have been developed to increase awareness and improve the response to older people who are victims of family violence and abuse. Alberta Justice and Alberta Solicitor General, in cooperation with Alberta Children's Services and police services, are involved in a major initiative to provide training to staff involved in the criminal justice system including, but not limited to, police, Crown prosecutors, court personnel, corrections, and victim service workers.

Steps are also underway to provide education and training for approximately 700 frontline staff in Alberta Human Resources and Employment over the next two years. The training is designed to ensure sensitive and effective implementation of the enhanced supports available to victims of violence through the Alberta Works Program.

✔ Establish clear guidelines for information sharing among frontline responders to family violence and bullying

Throughout the roundtable process, questions were raised about what information can be shared and under what conditions. Protecting the privacy of individuals and families involved in family violence is a paramount concern. At the same time, sharing critical information is essential to ensure a coordinated response and to protect the safety of children and families. To address these questions and strike the right balance, information sharing guidelines will be developed. Cross-sector training will be developed, building on already existing information sharing guidelines and expanding them to specifically address issues related to family violence.

Services and supports

While many of the actions in this plan are focused on preventing family violence and bullying, the reality is that when family violence occurs, family members, children, abusers and victims, and everyone affected by the incidents, need timely access to services and supports. That includes an effective justice response. It includes places where people can be safe. And it includes effective treatment and follow-up for both the victims and the abusers.

✔ Implement a Provincial Family Violence Program Framework

When family violence occurs, there needs to be an effective and comprehensive response including assessment, treatment, rehabilitation and follow-up services for perpetrators and victims. The partnering ministries involved in family violence have developed a provincial family violence program framework. In the first phase, implementation of the new treatment framework will include community-based funding for treatment (including clinical triage, assessment and treatment), addiction services, and supervision/probation in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Red Deer.

✔ Enhance the justice response to family violence

Throughout the roundtable process, a number of suggestions were made for enhancing the way the justice system responds when there are incidents of family violence. A number of key initiatives will be undertaken as part of this approach. As announced at the provincial roundtable, a new Coordinator for Family Violence Initiatives has been appointed in Alberta Justice. The Coordinator is working with community and government stakeholders to explore family violence initiatives such as proposals for a family violence centre in Edmonton and a provincial threat assessment unit that could respond to crisis situations. The Coordinator is also working with Alberta Solicitor General, Alberta Children's Services, and police agencies to develop and deliver training on family violence issues to prosecutors and police to assist them in investigating and prosecuting domestic violence cases.

Specialized domestic violence courts currently are in place in Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge and, plans for a similar court in Red Deer are under review. In response to recommendations by the Unified Family Court Task Force, work on the development of a family justice strategy is planned. This strategy will consider what family justice services are required and how they might be delivered province-wide. Issues such as court procedures, court administration and information technology relating to family matters will also be examined.

The issue of how to provide a voice for children and to provide advocacy in high-conflict custody and access disputes is being examined. In Calgary, a community-based pilot project will provide a lawyer for children in custody and access disputes where family violence is involved. In Edmonton, the Legal Aid Family Law Office provides legal representation for children in family law situations, where eligible, and where a lawyer is considered necessary. The outcomes of both of these projects will help guide future initiatives for children affected by family violence.

Federal and provincial justice partners are also working together to make grants available to communities to prevent and respond to family violence and other types of crime through policing, restorative justice, and various crime prevention strategies.

The Aboriginal Justice Initiatives Unit within Alberta Solicitor General is working with several Aboriginal communities to present workshops focusing on violence, specifically family violence and sexual assault. Much of this work is centered on promoting safe communities, building confidence in the justice system, and empowering communities to create their own solutions.

✔ Provide additional support to families escaping family violence

The lack of financial support can be one of the key reasons why women stay in or return to abusive situations. Families leaving abusive situations may not have financial resources readily available to cover additional expenses such as transportation, childcare costs, housing, legal advice, counseling and medical appointments. Transition funding is an important way of supporting families escaping violent situations until they are able to get established in a new situation. Steps have been taken to streamline the process and respond quickly to the needs of families escaping family violence. Supplementary benefits are available through the Alberta Works Income Support program to provide families with the resources they need to establish a household in the community and remain independent from their abuser. This Escaping Family Violence benefit of $1000 is available to clients who need to move because of the abuse or violence by a spouse or partner. Income Support also may help pay for moving costs when it is essential for the safety of any family member to move within Alberta or Canada to flee abuse.

✔ Expand access to safe accommodation in emergency situations

Work is underway to review current policy on funding for prevention of family violence initiatives including shelter programs and to establish criteria for funding new emergency safe housing options on a priority basis. The new policy will establish guiding principles and clear criteria for funding allocations and will take into account best practices and needs across the province.

In addition to the need for safe accommodation in emergency situations, transitional (or second stage) housing is often a need for individuals and families ready to leave emergency housing. Through the local community planning process, municipalities are encouraged to identify the need for transitional housing and to initiate transitional housing projects based on their needs.

✔ Expand support available to victims of family violence and abuse

The Victims of Crime Fund is designed to assist organizations that help victims of crime during their involvement with the criminal justice system. Many of these organizations deal with victims of family violence. In the next two years, an additional $1.6 million will be allocated from the Victims of Crime Fund to support victims, including victims of family violence.

✔ Use targeted telephone lines (211) to provide immediate access to essential information whenever family violence occurs

In Edmonton, a new 211 information and referral line has been established. 211 is an easy to remember, three digit telephone number that connects callers to an array of services and community programs, information, and referral services, particularly in crisis situations. This will be an important resource for victims of family violence and abuse who will be able to call 211 and obtain immediate access to the resource and support information they need. A similar 211 line is being established in Calgary. Consideration will be given to the possibility of extending the 211 line province-wide. In addition, the province-wide Health Link system connects people to trained nurses and physicians and could be used as another source of information and support for families who need help.

✔ Expand the availability and access to safe visitation and access sites

Alberta Children's Services will work with government and community partners to explore the feasibility of developing safe visitation and access centres for children and their families. These family friendly centres would be used by families who are subject to supervised access court orders through either domestic courts or through family courts.

✔ Make specialized services and supports available and accessible to people who have experienced sexual assaults as part of family violence

Frequently, when we think of sexual assaults, we don't think about them happening within families. In fact, family violence can and does take the form of sexual assault. Currently, the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres provides a key role in identifying and addressing the needs of people who experience sexual assaults. Alberta Children's Services will continue to work with the Association to build partnerships, enhance networking, and explore options for comprehensive services to better serve the victims of sexual assaults that occur as part of family violence.

Accountability

One of the key components of this plan is a clear focus on accountability. That involves using the best available evidence to guide programs and decisions, continually evaluating the outcomes of programs and services, expanding research about family violence and abuse, developing appropriate measures to assess progress, and ensuring that individuals are held accountable for their behaviour if and when they are involved in family violence and bullying.

✔ Develop a provincial family violence and bullying research partnership

Ongoing research is essential not only to assess the effectiveness of various programs but also to address the root causes of family violence and prevention. As part of this approach, academic institutions, community research partnerships, government agencies and corporate partners are working together to develop a research agenda with a particular focus on applied research to support program and policy decisions in the prevention of family violence and bullying. The new Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research will work with a variety of community and government stakeholders, universities and research entities to address the need for expanded research into family violence and bullying. The University of Calgary is exploring partnerships with government, corporations and individuals to establish a Chair in Family Violence and Bullying to expand research on family violence and bullying in Alberta.

✔ Establish a database of programs, initiatives and information, and update on an annual basis

Many different programs and initiatives are being developed and implemented in communities across the province. It's important to share information about these various initiatives and track progress in reducing family violence on an ongoing basis. Alberta Children's Services will establish a database of actions on family violence and update the information annually.

- **Partner with national and international leaders to hold a world conference on family violence**

Alberta is planning a world conference on family violence in October 2005. The conference will bring together leading experts from around the world and help develop a strong and diverse base of evidence to support future initiatives to prevent family violence. The conference will explore emerging research, social trends and promising programs and practices from around the globe.

Expanding partnerships

Preventing family violence and bullying is everyone's business. The roundtable process pointed to a wealth of ideas where businesses, faith communities, federal and municipal governments, Aboriginal peoples, and other community members have important roles to play.

A sample of some of those ideas includes the following:

- Encourage workplaces to develop family wellness programs, recognize and support the importance of family time, provide employees with time off to deal with family violence and bullying issues, and develop and deliver workplace-based training and protocols on how to deal with incidents of family violence and bullying
- Encourage governments to develop legislation and regulations designed to reduce exposure to violent images in the media including movies, videos, and electronic games
- Encourage and expand Aboriginal partnerships
- Encourage faith communities to address family violence in marriage counseling and marriage preparation courses, provide faith-based parenting workshops and support, and promote healthy relationships
- Encourage municipalities and community organizations to increase access to affordable recreation and leisure activities for families
- Enlist community members and corporate leaders to act as champions who will speak out against family violence and bullying
- Encourage better training for coaches and parents involved in sports and take steps to reduce the incidence of violence
- Support community-based networks and organizations to ensure that every neighbourhood has a "safe place" where children and families can go to escape family violence
- Review and enhance culturally relevant materials in a variety of languages in partnership with ethno-cultural communities
- Establish a speaker's bureau of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people to build understanding of their unique issues within communities and with service providers
- Expand services for men who are victims of family abuse through partnerships with community agencies
- Involve professional organizations and service clubs in addressing and preventing family violence and bullying
- Enhance family violence training and information available to individuals, families and service providers in partnership with community organizations and advocacy groups serving disabled people
- Mobilize town and city councils to provide clear leadership and direction on family violence in cooperation with local agencies
- Work with the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network to support the development of community response models that include awareness and prevention of abuse of older adults

These are just some of the suggestions coming from the roundtable process. As work on this report proceeds, the proposed single entity will play a critical role in bringing the various partners together, sharing the findings of local consultations, and ensuring that action can take place not only at the provincial and community levels but also in businesses, workplaces, faith communities, schools, and at the federal and municipal government levels.

Longer term plans

The first objective for this report is to get things moving - to take immediate action on the package of priority actions outlined in the previous section. But those actions are just the starting point. Over the longer term, the goal is for individuals, families, communities and provincial ministries to work together to address all the key areas for action outlined in this report.

The new single entity responsible for ongoing leadership on family violence and bullying will have a critical role to play. In effect, this new entity will be responsible for determining longer term strategies, assessing the outcomes achieved, and reporting regularly to Albertans on the progress made in achieving the vision set out in this report.

It is expected that the next steps will focus on:

- Developing a cross-ministry plan with targeted actions and resource requirements
- Establishing key medium- and long-term milestones to be achieved
- Working with Aboriginal leaders and community members to develop and implement new solutions to prevent family violence and abuse in Aboriginal communities and support the healing process
- Establishing measurements and reporting requirements as a way of tracking outcomes and progress over the longer term
- Ensuring that longer term, sustainable funding and support is in place
- Continuing steps to raise awareness of family violence and bullying, address stereotypes and racism, and promote positive relationships.

It is envisioned that a new single entity could review plans and progress on an ongoing basis, work with communities to identify new priorities, and report to Albertans on a regular basis.

Next steps

The roundtable process was an outstanding example of what can happen when committed and concerned Albertans come together to address a pressing issue in our society. In turn, the provincial government's commitment to those involved in the roundtable process, to people who have been victims of family violence and bullying, and to all Albertans is that action will be taken. The roundtable process was just the beginning. Now the work shifts from ideas to action, from possibilities to realities.

Working together, we can find the best solutions. We can achieve the vision of an Alberta free of family violence and bullying. Most important, we can break the cycle of violence and make sure that all Alberta's children grow up in safe and secure families.